

Thoughts From Other Minds:

We should observe, first, *how our Lord speaks of the grace of brotherly love.*

He returns to it a second time, though He has already spoken of it in the former part of His discourse. He would have us know that we can never think too highly of love, attach too much weight to it, labour too much to practice it. Truths which our Master thinks it needful to enforce on us by repetition, must needs be of first-class importance.

He commands us to love one another. "This is my commandment." It is a positive duty laid on our consciences to practice this grace. We have no more right to neglect it than any of the ten precepts given on Mount Sinai.

He supplies the highest standard of love: "Love one another, as I have loved you." No lower measure must content us. The weakest, the lowest, the most ignorant, the most defective disciple, is not to be despised. All are to be loved with an active, self-denying, self-sacrificing love. He that cannot do this, or will not try to do it, is disobeying the command of his Master.

A precept like this should stir up in us great searchings of heart. It condemns the selfish, ill-natured, jealous, ill-tempered spirit of many professing Christians, with a sweeping condemnation. Sound views of doctrine, and knowledge of controversy, will avail us nothing at last, if we have known nothing of love.

Without love we may pass muster very well as Churchmen; but without love we are no better, says St. Paul, than "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." (1 Cor 13:1) Where there is no Christlike love, there is no grace, no work of the Spirit, and no reality in our religion. Blessed are they that do not forget Christ's commandment! They are those who shall "have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev 22:14) The unloving Christian is unmeet for heaven. ...

We should observe, lastly, *how the Lord, speaks of the doctrine of election.* He says, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, ... that ye should go and bring forth fruit." The choosing here ... includes not only the election to the Apostolic office, which was peculiar to the eleven, but the election to eternal life, which is the privilege of all believers. To this last "choosing," as it specially concerns ourselves, we may profitably direct our attention. Election to eternal life is a truth of Scripture which we must receive humbly, and believe implicitly. Why the Lord Jesus calls some and does not call others, quickens whom He will, and leaves others alone in their sins, these are deep things which we cannot explain. Let it suffice us to know that it is a fact. God must begin the work of grace in a man's heart, or else a man will never be saved. Christ must first choose us and call us by His Spirit, or else we shall never choose Christ. Beyond doubt if not saved, we shall have none to blame but ourselves. But if saved, we shall certainly trace up the beginning of our salvation to the choosing grace of Christ. Our song to all eternity will be that which fell from the lips of Jonah: "Salvation is of the Lord." (Jonah 2:9).

J C Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on John*, Vol 3, pp. 123-126.

Camperdown Noorat Terang Presbyterian Charge

7 August 2016—Lord's Supper

Sermon: ""Jesus – the Christ who is the True Vine # 2" (text: Jn 15:11-17)

Scripture: John 15:1-17

Sermon Notes

Introduction: Last time we celebrated the Lord's Supper we considered the first part of Jesus' teaching following his last 'I am' statement, "I am the true vine" (Jn 15:1). This is marked off by the word 'fruit' in vs. 1 and again in v. 16, and the divisions are marked by 'these things' (vs. 11 and 17, ESV).

In that study we saw that Jesus was contrasting himself with Old Covenant Israel, which the prophets often likened to a vine which instead of producing good grapes of justice and righteousness produced wild grapes of bloodshed and an outcry on account of evil; greed, drunkenness, pride, contempt for God etc. (Isa 5:1-2).

When Jesus said "I am the true vine" he meant that he was the one who would bear the fruit that Israel should have borne but did not; he also meant that the way to be joined to the people of God was to be joined to him, by being born of God's Spirit and by believing in him (Jn 3:14-15).

By believing in Jesus we are joined to him as the true vine, and so, joined to him by faith in him we draw life from him as a branch does from the vine; but the vine bears its fruit on its branches, and so if we are really joined to Jesus we will bear the fruit of that obedience to God that springs from love for Jesus and his Father.

To this end in these verses (1-17) Jesus gives us three commands: 'Abide in me' (v. 4) - by faith, nurtured by the scriptures, by prayer, by meeting with other Christians for worship and encouragement; 'Abide in my love' (v. 9), which we do as we obey him (vs. 9-10); and 'Love one another as I have loved you' (v. 12).

1. Love, our command

Jesus must regard love for one another, love by those who love the Lord Jesus for those who also love him, as very important, is here repeating himself (Jn 13:34-35) with emphasis: 'These things I command you, so that you will love one another' (v. 17). So it's not surprising that Jesus' apostles also command us who love him to love one another (Rom 12:9-10; 1 Thess 4:9-10; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 Jn 4:7).

At a practical level, loving one another means preferring one another over unbelievers. When we love someone we enjoy being with them more than being with other people that we do not love; so we ought to enjoy being with other believers more than being with others. There is something wrong with us as professing Christians if we prefer the company of unbelievers who do not love our Lord Jesus.

Also as a practical level (love is very practical) loving one another means being there both when we gather for worship and when other believers are in need. We

are not to neglect to meet together at the appointed times (Heb 10:25) for how can we encourage one another if we are not there? And we are 'through love [to] serve one another' (Gal 5:13; cf. also 1 Jn 3:11-18).

2. Love, our mark

Love for Christians is one of the identifying marks of a Christian: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." So one of the grounds for assurance of faith, of knowing that we are saved, is that we love others who love the Lord Jesus. If we don't, then we are in our natural state of spiritual death (1 Jn 3:14, 4:7-8).

Do we love know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers? Do we prefer the company of Christians to the company of people who are not Christians? Are we as comfortable and at ease with people who have not been born again as we are with people who have been born again and who do believe in Jesus?

If we are, could it be because instead of being witnesses for Jesus we keep quiet about our faith and our Lord? The world hated Jesus because he testified that its works are evil (Jn 7:7); he also said it would hate his disciples (Jn 15:18); but if there is no tension, could it be that we do not? What do we say when people take the Lord's name in vain, when they approve of abortion, or homosexuality, or evolution?

3. Love, our measure

Christian love is not for Christians only but for all (1 Thess 3:12) - but love for all means being openly Christian, for love would have sinners saved, and this will create tensions with unbelievers, even to breaking relationships when they react to the gospel with hostility.

The measure of the love we are to have for one another is the love of Jesus for us—and there is no greater love than this, for greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends (Jn 15:12-13). His enemies condemned him as 'a friend of tax collectors and sinners' (Matt 11:19).

So he was, for he loved sinners and called them to repentance, faith forgiveness and holiness; he is the friend of sinners—and if you know yourself a sinner in need of a Saviour, call on him to save you. Jesus is the friend of sinners, but we are his friends only if we do what he commands us.

Once we did not do what he commands; we did not obey him, and we were not his friends—but if we now do, he himself has brought about this change. He had revealed his truth to us in a saving way according to his choice of us (vs. 15-16)

We are to love one another with that love by which he laid down his life for his friends. If we are among his friends, if we obey him, then he loved us personally and laid down his life for us (Gal 2:20). May his love for us stir us up to love one another!

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My Notes:

Questions for Reflection:

1. IS publishes a magazine called DABIQ; in a recent article it declares of Christians "We hate you because you are unbelievers.' How ought we respond to hatred and why? (Matt 5:43-48, 1 Thess 3:12, Rom 13:8-10).
2. Given that commands to love God and our neighbour are at least as old as the Ten Commandments, in what way is Jesus' command that we love one another 'new'? (Jn 13:34-35). What does this suggest about outsiders?
3. Read and reflect upon these commands for Christians to 'love one another': Romans 12:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 Jn 4:7; how important is this loving one another and why?
4. How does the apostle John (especially in his first letter) use love for Christians in connect with assurance of faith (our being sure that we are Christians)? (1 Jn 3:11-14, 4:7-8).
5. What does it mean that Jesus is the friend of sinners, but we are his friends if we do what he commands? How does this cast light on what it means for us to love one another as Jesus has loved us?